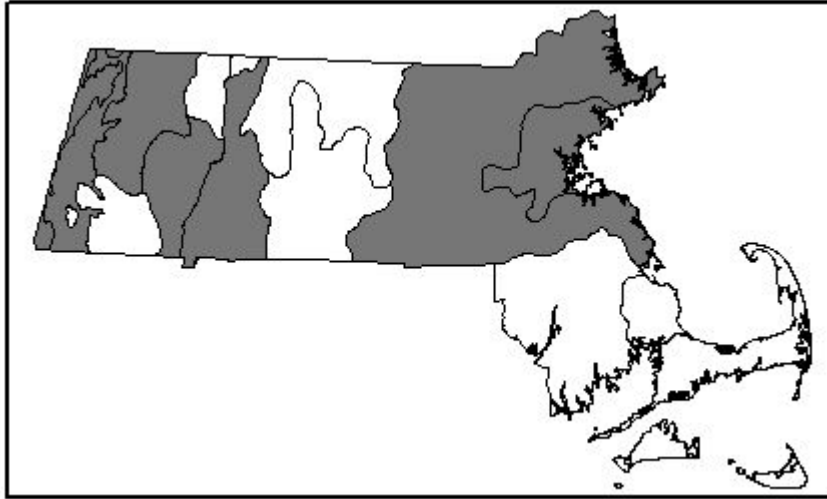


Community Name: RIDGETOP PITCH PINE - SCRUB OAK

Community Code: CT2A1A1000

SRANK: S2



Concept: Ridgetop pitch pine-scrub oak woodland occurring on acidic bedrock, often occurring in a mosaic with Acidic Rocky Summit / Rock outcrop Communities.

Environmental Setting: This community, tolerant of extremely xeric growing conditions, is found on ridge tops and exposed outcrops of acidic bedrock (including schists, gneiss, granite and quartzite), ranging in elevation (in Western Massachusetts) from 255 to 792 meters. Aspect may range from N to S along ridgetops, but in general the most typical examples have a south to southwest aspect, and are found on level crests as well as steep slopes and receive high solar insolation. Soil accumulation is slow and soil depths are generally shallow, often with considerable exposed bedrock. Communities appear to be fire dependent--where fire has been infrequent, succession to white pine-oak forest is often evident.

Vegetation Description: Ridgetops and steep upper mountain slopes with an open to closed canopy of pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*). Soils are thin, in places consisting only of a thin layer (2 cm) of duff and decomposed leaves over bedrock, ranging to several centimeters of sandy, rocky very well drained soil. The woodland canopy characteristically contains somewhat dwarfed pitch pines (avg. 5 m tall), with scattered taller trees including red oak (*Quercus rubra*), black oak (*Q. velutina*), rock chestnut oak (*Q. montana*) and scarlet oak (*Q. coccinea*). Gray birch (*Betula populifolia*), and hickories (*Carya* spp.) are occasionally present in the canopy or subcanopy. Rarely, one may find red pine (*Pinus resinosa*). White pine (*Pinus strobus*) may dominate the canopy in areas that have not experienced regular fire disturbance. The understory is patchy, and often interspersed with large areas of exposed bedrock. Shrubs commonly include blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium* and/or *V. pallidum*), scrub oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*), and huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*). Chinquapin oak (*Quercus prinoides*) is occasionally present. Herbs are sparse and may include Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*), bastard toad-flax (*Comandra umbellata*), cow wheat (*Melampyrum lineare*), tall corydalis (*Corydalis sempervirens*), black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*), goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.), and at higher elevations, mountain white potentilla (*Potentilla tridentata*), and bearberry, (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*). Variants: A related pitch pine ridgetop community, usually lacking scrub oak, has an herbaceous layer dominated by hairgrass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) or poverty oats (*Danthonia spicata*). Another variation of acidic rocky ridgetop includes a shrub community dominated by scrub oak, with a similar complement of heaths and herbs, but lacking pitch pine. Pitch pine - scrub oak ridgetop communities may occur in patches with grassy balds, such as Acidic or Circumneutral Rocky Summit / Rock Outcrop Communities, lacking pitch pine and scrub oak. These small balds usually have a more diverse herb layer.

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Associations:

Habitat Values for Associated Fauna: No animal species are known to be restricted to this community. Communities of this type likely provide part of the habitat of wide ranging mammals, perches for birds of prey, and food and shelter for flocking song birds prior to the fall migration.

Associated Rare Plants:

SOLIDAGO GLUTINOSA SSP RANDII	RAND'S GOLDENROD	E
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Associated Rare Animals:

APHARETRA PURPUREA	BLUEBERRY SALLOW	SC
CATOCALA HERODIAS GERHARDI	GERHARD'S UNDERWING MOTH	T

Examples with Public Access: Mt. Everett, Race Mt., Alander Mt., Mt. Washington; Pine Cobble Mt.. Williamstown; Monument Mt., Stockbridge; Blue Hills, Milton; Mt. Tekoa and Mt. Shatterack.

Threats: Forest succession, fire suppression, trampling, litter.

Management Needs: Prescribed fire to keep fuel loads down, limit succession, and allow regeneration of pitch pine and heaths. As open summits provide great views, trails and education are needed to minimize human impacts such as trampling and littering.

Synonyms

USNVC/TNC: Pinus rigida Woodland Alliance -- Pinus rigida / Quercus ilicifolia / Aronia melanocarpa Woodland [CEGL006323] --and, in part, Pinus rigida / Aronia melanocarpa Woodland [CEGL006116].

MA (old name): Part of: New England Pitch pine/ scrub oak Barrens.

ME: Not described.

NH: Part of Appalachian oak-pine rocky ridge woodland/barren.

VT: Part of Pitch pine - Oak- heath Rocky summit.

NY: Related to Dwarf pine ridges and Pitch pine - oak - heath rockr summit.

CT: Includes: Schizachyrium scoparium- Danthonia spicata Grasslands - S. scoparium/ Hypericum gentianoides - ridgetop; Pinus rigida/Quercus ilicifolia community.

RI:

Weatherbee: Part of: Southern Acidic Rocky Summit.

Author: Sally Shaw **Date:** 7/19/99